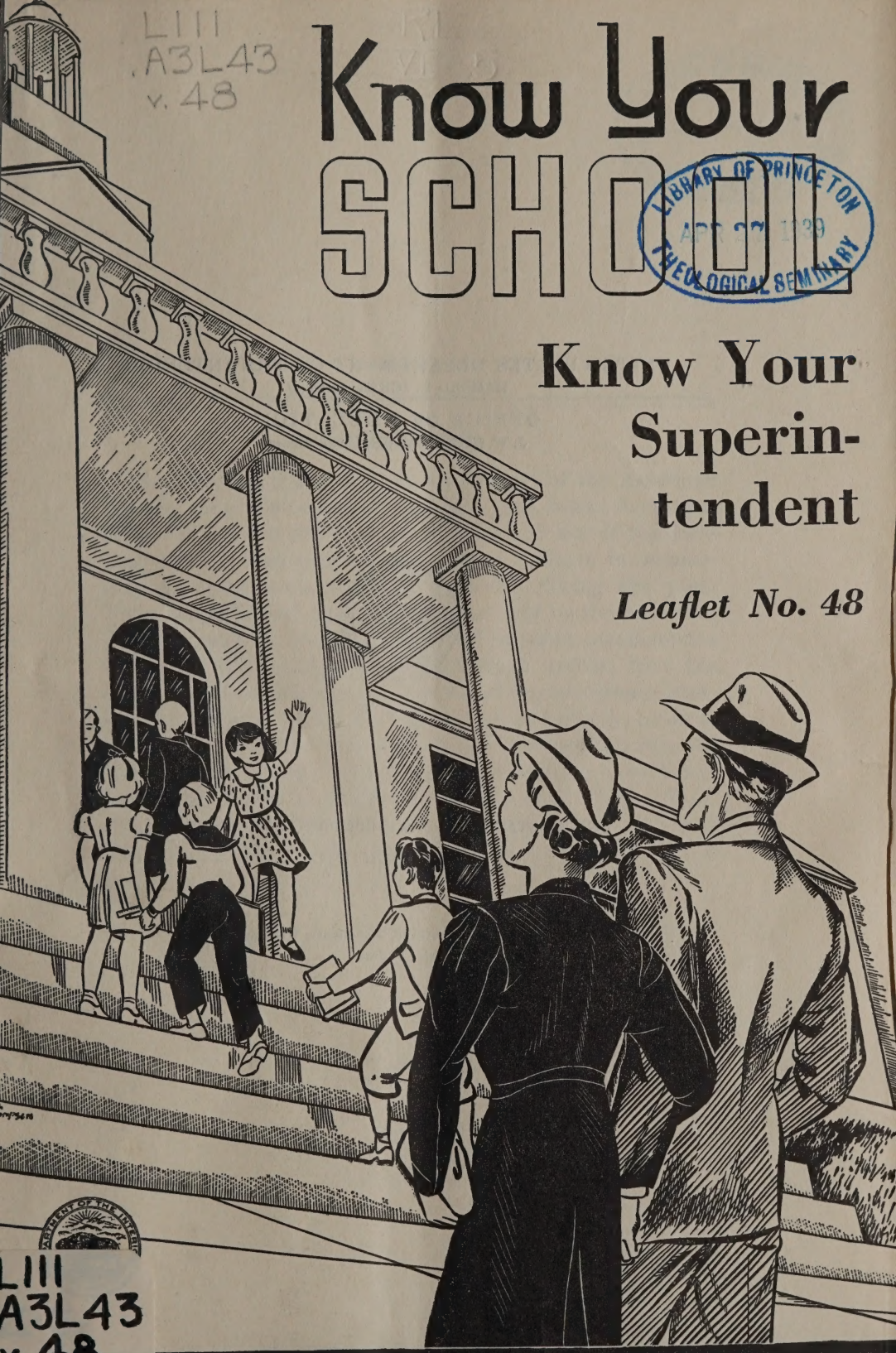
LIII
.A3L43
v. 48

Know Your SCHOOL

LIBRARY OF PRINCETON
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Know Your Superintendent

Leaflet No. 48



LIII
A3L43
v. 48

United States Department of the Interior • *Office of Education*

[illegible]

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
HAROLD L. ICKES, *Secretary*

OFFICE OF EDUCATION
J. W. STUDEBAKER, *Commissioner*

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE
WASHINGTON : 1939

✦

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C.
Price 5 cents

LIBRARY OF PRINCETON
APR 27 1939
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

FOREWORD

The Office of Education, at the request of the American Association of University Women last year, began the preparation of a series of study outlines for the use of the local branches of that organization. Four outlines in mimeographed form were issued at intervals during the year. They met with such good response not only by the American Association of University Women but by other organizations interested in studying the public-school system that the supply was soon exhausted. In view of the continuing interest, the Office of Education has decided to have the outlines printed as a series of leaflets under the general heading "Know Your School." The titles of the outlines already prepared are "Know Your Board of Education," "Know Your Superintendent," "Know Your School Principal," and "Know Your Teacher." Other outlines in the series will be issued at intervals this year.

BESS GOODYKOONTZ,
Assistant Commissioner of Education.

KNOW YOUR SUPERINTENDENT

By

W. S. Deffenbaugh

Chief, Division of American School Systems

Before 1837 there were no city school superintendents. That year Buffalo, N. Y., and Louisville, Ky., each established the position of superintendent of schools. Other cities followed their example, but up to 1870 there were school superintendents in only 29 of the 226 cities having a population of 8,000 or more. In the cities not having superintendents the boards of education, or school committees, had direct management of the schools and even in the cities having school superintendents the boards of education exercised executive functions to a large extent, the duties of the superintendents being chiefly of a clerical and inspectorial nature. After 1870 when cities began to increase in size the educational problems became so numerous and complex that boards of education could no longer exercise direct supervision over the schools. For some years, however, many boards of education continued to exercise some executive functions, but year by year greater and greater responsibility has been placed in the hands of the superintendent of schools until today his responsibilities and duties are such as make the school superintendency a most important public administrative position.

It is to the superintendent that the board of education and the public should look for the efficient administration of the schools, but unless he is granted certain responsibilities and duties he should not be held entirely responsible. In the following pages some of the powers and duties that should be accorded him are listed and some of the relationships that should exist between him and the board of education and between him and business officials, supervisors, principals, teachers, pupils, and the community are mentioned. These matters are mentioned as a starting point for discussion by study groups interested in the powers and duties of the superintendent of schools and in his official relationships. A brief list of references is appended.

POWERS AND DUTIES

What powers and duties should be conferred upon the superintendent of schools as the executive officer of the board of education?

What the powers and duties of school superintendents should be has been discussed from the time the first city school superintendent was appointed. Their powers and duties have, however, been gradually enlarged by school boards and by legislative enactments in some of the States. The following are some of the powers and duties that should be conferred upon city school superintendents:

1. To serve as the chief executive officer of the board of education in its conduct of the schools and of other agencies and activities under its control.
2. To attend all meetings of the board and of its committees and to exercise the right to speak on all matters before the board or committees, but without vote.
3. To nominate, as needed, assistant superintendents, business managers, supervisors, principals, teachers, custodians, and all other employees authorized by the board of education.
4. To recommend for suspension or discharge any employee whose services are so unsatisfactory as to warrant such action, subject to approval by the board after a hearing of the case.
5. To select, after conferring with supervisors, principals, teachers, and such other persons as the superintendent may designate, textbooks and all other supplies and appliances needed for the activities of the schools or other agencies under the control of the board.
6. To prepare or have prepared for his approval the content of each course of study authorized by the board of education.

7. To determine the boundaries of school attendance districts, subject to the approval of the board.
8. To have general supervision of the operation and maintenance of the school plant and equipment and the purchase and storage and distribution of textbooks and other supplies.
9. To direct the supervision of the elementary and high schools, of all special schools, and of all extracurriculum activities.
10. To assign principals, custodians, and other employees to the schools and teachers to schools and grades, and to transfer them according to the needs of the service.
11. To prepare, or to have prepared for his inspection, the school budget showing in detail the amount of funds necessary to meet the estimated needs for the ensuing year and submit it to the board for consideration and action.
12. To approve and direct all purchases and expenditures within the limits of the detailed budget approved by the board and to make monthly reports of such expenditures to the board.
13. To keep the board informed as to school building needs and to recommend plans for new buildings and for alterations of old buildings.
14. To grant the use of schoolrooms, auditoriums, and gymnasiums, for such community purposes and under such terms as the school board may establish.
15. To make monthly and annual reports to the board on the condition and needs of the schools.
16. To prepare for the approval of the board by-laws, rules, and regulations, needed for the direction and control of the schools.

It is evident that the superintendent of schools, especially the superintendent of a large school system, cannot perform all these duties himself. The actual performance of many of them must be delegated to assistant administrators. The superintendent as chief

executive officer should, however, be held responsible for the performance of such duties as are indicated in the foregoing list and of others that might be included.

RELATIONSHIPS

What should be the relationship between the board of education and the superintendent of schools?

The superintendent being the executive officer of the board of education, the relationship that should exist between the board of education and the superintendent should be similar to the relationship that exists between a board of bank directors or a board of any private corporation and its executive officer. The stockholders of a private corporation elect a board of directors to have control of the enterprise. The directors knowing but little concerning its technical aspects confine their work to a consideration of policies, and upon the adoption of certain policies place their execution in the hands of the chief executive officer and hold him responsible for results. The chief executive officer not only executes the policies but is called upon for recommendations as to the policies that should be adopted.

Similarly the people of a community elect school board members to have control of the schools and as in the case of members of a board of directors of a private corporation they know but little concerning the technical aspect of the work to be done and should likewise confine themselves to the adoption of policies and place the execution of the policies adopted in the hands of the chief executive officer—the superintendent of schools. It is not the function of a board of education either as a body or by means of committees actually to run the schools, nor is it the function of the president of the board to execute its policies. This function belongs to the superintendent.

What should be the relation of the superintendent to school business matters?

Formerly it was thought that the superintendent of schools should be concerned only with what were considered purely educational matters, such as supervision

of instruction. There thus grew up in some cities a dual system of administration, the superintendent being given charge of educational matters and the secretary of the board or a business manager of business affairs. It is now generally realized that educational and business matters should not be divided between two executive officers, each independent of the other, since educational and business problems overlap and intermingle. For example, the planning of school buildings and the selection of supplies and equipment obviously are no less educational than business problems. In brief the superintendent should be the official to coordinate the work of the business department with all other departments.

What should be the relationship of the superintendent to the supervisors of instruction?

The superintendent of schools has supervisory and administrative functions, but only in the very small cities does he perform both these functions himself. In the large cities the superintendent of necessity delegates the supervision of instruction to a staff of supervisors, but it is still his function to develop a supervisory organization and to have direction of the supervisors' activities. In a large city school system the direction of supervision may be indirectly through associate or assistant superintendents, but the superintendent himself should formulate, or at least approve, the supervisory program and see that it is carried out under whatever type of supervisory organization is adopted. Even though the supervisory program is placed in the hands of associate or assistant superintendents, the superintendent should in conjunction with them have conferences with the supervisors as a group or as individuals in order to consider and formulate the general and specific objectives of supervision and to find a solution to the numerous problems that arise in connection with supervision.

What should be the relationship of the superintendent to the principals?

Just as the superintendent of schools is responsible to the board of education for the management of the entire

school system so is the principal responsible to the superintendent for the management of the school to which he is assigned. The relationship should be such that the principal may carry out the policies of the superintendent's office with considerable freedom as to the means, but these means should meet with the approval of the superintendent, since the responsibility for the successful operation of an elementary or high school rests ultimately with the superintendent. It is to him that the board of education looks for the efficient management of each school in the city.

What should be the relationship of the superintendent to the teachers?

In a small school system the superintendent works to a great extent directly with the teachers. He knows all of them by name, visits their classrooms, and holds conferences with them on numerous problems, such as methods of teaching, the selection of textbooks, and the promotion of pupils. In a large city the superintendent's contact with the teachers is largely through assistant superintendents, supervisors, and principals. The superintendent, however, counsels not only with supervisors and principals but also with teachers as a group or with teachers' committees in regard to various questions of policy. The teachers are consulted regarding changes in the course of study, change of textbooks, teacher-rating schemes, school building plans especially as they relate to classroom arrangements and equipment, plans for the promotion of pupils, and numerous other matters. Such procedure helps in bringing up questions in which the teachers are especially interested. The final decision on all such matters, however, rests with the superintendent; but with the advice of teachers he should be able to make much wiser decisions than by merely relying upon his own knowledge and experience.

What should be the relationship of the superintendent to the pupils?

Although the superintendent, except the one in a very small city school system, is not in close contact with the pupils, his first allegiance is to them. In all his recom-

mendations to the board of education, in his formulation of objectives, in his selection of teachers and textbooks, in his preparation of courses of study he has the one objective—the education of children. Schools are not organized for superintendents, supervisors, or teachers, but for the pupils. The superintendent's relation to the pupils even if indirect is a very vital one.

What should be the relation of the superintendent to the community?

One of the duties of the superintendent of schools, although it is not usually included among the duties expressly assigned him, is to be the educational leader in the community. It is his duty to take the lead in keeping the community informed about and interested in the schools. If the people are not kept informed of the needs of the schools, such needs may not be supplied by the board of education which represents the people, or if they are supplied by the board they may have to be justified later. The superintendent should be able to explain the needs of the schools as such needs relate to the welfare of the individual child and of society.

In a large city it is impossible for the superintendent himself to keep the people of the city fully informed about the schools. Much of the public relations work must be carried on by others under his direction, possibly by a division of public relations to compile and make available through various channels pertinent facts regarding all phases of the school system.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. In your State what powers are conferred by State law upon city school superintendents? Should their powers and duties be defined by State law, or by the board of education? If by State law, enumerate the powers and duties that should be so conferred.
2. Examine the rules and regulations adopted by the board of education in your city to see what power and duties are expressly granted the superintendent.
3. Why should the superintendent attend not only school board meetings but also committee meetings?

4. After a board of education has adopted certain policies and placed their execution in the hands of the superintendent, upon what matters of detail, if any, should he consult the board of education?
5. In your State what qualifications does the State law or State board of education set up for city school superintendents? What qualifications should a city school superintendent possess with respect to education, experience, and personal traits?
6. For what length of term should the superintendent of schools be appointed? Would indefinite tenure be better than a term of specified length?
7. What procedure should a board of education follow in selecting a new superintendent of schools?
8. What information about the schools should a school superintendent give the public? Through what channels?
9. How may a board of education determine the efficiency of its chief executive officer?
10. Compare the importance of the school superintendency with that of other public offices.
11. On what phases of administration should the superintendent consult with supervisors, principals, and teachers?
12. Study the organization charts of several city school systems to see what relationships have been set up.

REFERENCES

BAIR, FREDERICK H. The social understanding of the superintendent of schools. New York city, Teachers college, Columbia university. Contribution to education, No. 625, 1934.

BOLTON, FREDERICK ELMER; COLE, THOMAS RAYMOND; *and* JESSUP, JOHN HANNICUT. The beginning superintendent. New York. The Macmillan company, 1937.

CUBBERLEY, ELLWOOD P. Public-school administration. Boston, Houghton Mifflin company, 1929. Chs. XIV and XV.

DEPARTMENT OF SUPERINTENDENCE, NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION. Educational leadership. Eleventh Yearbook, 1933. Washington, D. C., The association.

——— ——— The superintendent surveys supervision. Eighth Yearbook, 1930. Washington, D. C., The association.

ENGELHARDT, FRED. Public-school organization and administration. Boston, Ginn and company, 1931. Chs. IV and V.

GILLAND, THOMAS MCDOWELL. The origin and development of the powers and duties of the city school superintendent. Chicago, Ill., The university of Chicago press, 1935.

GRAVES, FRANK PIERREPONT. The administration of American education. New York, The Macmillan company, 1932. Ch. XXI. The superintendent of schools.

GRINNELL, JOHN ERLE. Interpreting the public schools. New York, McGraw-Hill book company, 1937.

HUNKINS, R. The superintendent at work in smaller schools. Boston, D. C. Heath and company, 1931.

MELBY, E. O. Organization and administration of supervision. Bloomington, Ill., Public school publishing company, 1930.

REEDER, WARD G. The business administration of a school system. Boston, Ginn and company, 1929. Ch. II. Administrative relationships in school organization.

——— An introduction to public school relations. New York, The Macmillan company, 1937.

SMITH, H. P. Business administration of public schools. Yonkers-on-Hudson, N. Y., World book company, 1929.

WEBER, OSCAR F. Problems in public-school administration. New York, The Century company, 1930. Ch. II: The duties of public-school administrators. Ch. IV: The relation of the administrator to the board of education. Ch. XVII: The superintendent as business administrator.

See "The Education Index" *and* "Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature" for articles in journals of education on the superintendent of schools.

○